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**ASSEMBLYMEMBER JEROME E. HORTON ELECTED AS CHAIRMAN OF
CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS**

SACRAMENTO – Assemblymember Jerome E. Horton was recently elected as chairman of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC). Horton was elected by a unanimous vote of the current membership and will serve for a period of one year. Assemblymember Horton will succeed the previous chairman, Roderick Wright. Wright served as the chairman for period of four years.

Assemblymember Roderick Wright said: “I feel confident that Mr. Horton will take the reins of the Caucus and continue to fight to ensure that the African American perspective is represented and their voices are heard.”

“I consider it an honor to have received this vote of confidence from my colleagues, and I will work with them to ensure that the foundation laid by my predecessors is strengthened,” Assemblymember Horton stated.

Horton takes the reins of the California Legislative Black Caucus during a time which blatantly calls for continued strong leadership. The State of California is facing a \$20 billion deficit; there are rumors of dissension between African Americans and Latinos, and the number of Black Caucus members continues to dwindle. Additionally, based on reports issued by the Joint Labor Management Discrimination Committee, African Americans in civil service are facing even stiffer odds regarding job discrimination. Despite these obstacles, Horton, who is known for his steadfast and dogged work ethic is determined to build the coalitions necessary to advance quality education, equal employment, fair contracting and public safety.

To Horton, the rumor regarding African American and Latino squabbles is just that – rumor. “I believe that there are opportunists who would capitalize on our differences and incite anger for their own personal and political gain. However, as people, we have more in common than the differences we share. At the end of the day, we all want the same things – safety and security for our families, quality education, reliable health care and an opportunity to do our best. I strongly believe that the strength of our union is founded in the differences we share,” Horton stated.

Regarding Horton's election as chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus, **Hugh B. Price, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban League**, said: "It is a thrilling development for the people of the state. He will bring the kind of compassion and leadership necessary to advance the agenda."

Horton would like to use the California Legislative Black Caucus pulpit to spread the concept of "collective thought." He perceives the Caucus to be a place where people can exchange thoughts and ideas and emerge with a common agenda. He also sees it as a place to assist in developing agendas specific to independent groups. These agendas will serve to provide the Caucus with a legislative and political focus toward improving the quality of life within diversified communities.

"As has been the case since African Americans came to these shores, whenever we tackle issues, the benefits extend far beyond our circle of impact. I am confident that our collective thought and agenda will transcend race and geographic boundaries," Horton said.

Assemblymember Horton, in concert with the leadership of the Caucus, is developing an overall plan for the California Legislative Black Caucus to broaden its base and sphere of influence by building coalitions with community and business based organizations. This will include participation in various programs with other legislative caucuses and establishing resource referral and information sharing opportunities among and between groups internal and external to the Legislature.

The plan will also expand the role of the Black Caucus to one that will assist in identifying, defining and implementing a statewide multicultural agenda from an African American perspective. This will be accomplished via the business and community educational outreach component. A major medium in this effort will be the development and maintenance of rapport with African American organizations, appointed and elected officials. This component will aid in opening the lines of communication between the Legislature and statewide organizations.

The third segment of the effort will focus on identifying and responding to the educational needs of our communities, with specific budget and legislative priorities. This will include legislative and political leadership programs. In addition, Horton envisions each of the Caucus members assuming leadership roles in a significant focus area. He feels that each member is a vital part of the organization and equally responsible for its success. "We need to rebuild community confidence in elected officials. This will of course take time and demand a concentrated effort. It may not be easy, however, it must be done," Assemblymember Horton stated.

Assemblymember Horton's goal is to utilize these strategies to strengthen and build upon the initial concept of the California Legislative Black Caucus. The Caucus was founded in 1967. It was and is conceptually based on the premise that working in concert, African Americans can make gains. The genesis goes back to 1918, with the election of Frederick M. Roberts, the first African American elected to the California Legislature. Although he was the sole African American in the Legislature, Roberts sought to provide a foundation and platform for future generations. Throughout the years, Caucus members have strengthened and broadened this

foundation, with the goal today being to partner with other multicultural organizations to further the goals of the membership. The CLBC has been instrumental in drafting and supporting legislation designed to promote racial and gender equity, as well as justice for the poor and other disenfranchised groups and people.

In assuming the reins of the Caucus, Assemblymember Horton will blend his vision with the ideals and goals of the past leadership of the Caucus. As such, Assemblymember Wright will continue to be an active member as Chairman Emeritus, while working to ensure a smooth transition for the new Chairman.

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